Distr.: General
12 May 1999

Original: English

THIRD UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON THE EXPLORATION AND PEACEFUL USES OF OUTER SPACE

Vienna
19-30 July 1999

Abstract of the national paper of the United States of America

1. The present paper provides an overview of recent accomplishments and activities of the United States of America in space in three major sectors, civil, national security and commercial. United States space activities are contributing to international scientific understanding, global security and economic growth. Highlights include activities related to the International Space Station, understanding the Earth's environment, exploring the solar system and the universe and developing new space technologies.

2. Since the Second United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE II) in 1982, there have been great technological advances, especially in the management and communication of information. International conditions have also undergone great change, with the end of the cold war creating new opportunities for space cooperation. International space activities are being conducted by both public and private sector organizations as a result of globalization and commercial space activities. Revenues from space commerce have been growing rapidly, driven by demand for global information services. Commercial revenues now exceed spending by Governments on space activity.

3. The United States has restructured and streamlined its public sector activities in recent years. The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) is a transformed agency compared with even six years ago: its focus is now on smaller, faster, cheaper missions offering more frequent opportunities for international cooperation. The Agency is now sized and organized to focus more on technology development activities while pursuing ways to privatize and commercialize its major operations in the future.

4. A significant trend for the United States is efforts by the Department of Defense and NASA to expand their relationships with industry beyond those of traditional contractors, to relations more like partnerships. This is intended to result in the commercial sector having both more control over United States space activities as well as increased funding responsibilities. Some candidate areas for new partnerships include the X-33, the Evolved Expendable Launch Vehicle, launch range modernization and NASA's Shuttle Flight Operations Contract. In space transportation, the United States has continued successful operation and improvement of the Space Shuttle (improving its safety, performance, cost and operability). The United States commercial space launch industry has matured and grown more complex, including the creation of international joint ventures. United States government agencies now routinely buy commercial launch services.

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5. As United Nations Member States look to the future, the challenges and opportunities created by space activities are great. In particular, plans for future space activities are being shaped by new information technologies, globalization and the increasing importance of private sector activities. Emerging commercial space systems and applications show particular promise in benefits to developing countries. Precise position location, navigation and timing are available free of charge to users anywhere in the world as a result of the Global Positioning System. Commercial mobile satellite services will provide data, voice and even Internet connections anywhere in the world, creating "instant infrastructure" in regions now lacking adequate telecommunications.

6. In order for space exploration and development to benefit all United Nations Member States more effectively, greater international cooperation will be needed, not only on specific projects such as environmental monitoring and protection, but also in ensuring that international regulatory structures encourage commercial space activities in ways that are predictable, transparent and effective.